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Public Health Reports

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WASHINGTON, D. C., JULY 21, 1899.

No. 29.

UNITED STATES.

[Reports to the Supervising Surgeon-General United States Marine-Hospital Service.]

REPORTS FROM THE MEXICAN BORDER.

El Paso, Tex.—Sanitary Inspector E. Alexander reports, July 10, that Saturday the week ended July 8, 1899, there arrived on the Mexican Central Railroad a passenger from Guatemala via Vera Cruz. This passenger proved conclusively that he passed through Vera Cruz just eleven days before his arrival here. However, having baggage, the same was disinfected by a thorough saturation in a solution of bichloride of mercury 1-1000, and allowed to dry, for which purpose the passenger had to be detained here one day. No passengers during the past week from Tampico.

Laredo, Tex.—A. A. Surg. H. J. Hamilton, reports July 10: I have the honor to submit the following report for the week ended July 8, 1899. Inspected and allowed entry at international footbridge, 2,650; refused entry, 10, viz: 3 from Tampico, 7 unable to give satisfactory evidence as to where they were from recently; refused entry via Mexican National Railroad, 8; and disinfected the baggage of 6 persons. All persons denied having been in an infected locality within ten days, but their evidence was not sufficient. For the past few days I have been receiving only United States consular or Marine-Hospital certificates, passengers learning that other certificates were of no practical use unless accompanied with other evidence. I have a United States Marine-Hospital Service guard meet the trains from the interior points of Mexico at Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, so as to get an idea who arrives and remains on Mexican side. Although the Mexican health authorities have denied the existence of smallpox at Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, for about two months, I occasionally find a death from that cause in the mortality register. There are 2 deaths from smallpox in the inclosed mortality report for week ended July 8.

Assistant Surgeon Cofer advises me that he will endeavor to send me daily lists of suspected infected persons, which will be of great benefit in keeping out suspects, etc.

Acting Assistant Surgeon Turpin has also promised to send me a paper daily which will contain all the hotel registers in Mexico City, with ingress and egress of all the principal passengers on the railroads. This will also be of material help in tracing persons who may appear at the frontier for inspection.

I believe the system now being used reduces the danger from Vera Cruz or other Mexican points to a minimum, and causes very little inconvenience to noninfected persons.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

Disappearance of smallpox.

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 12, 1899.

SIR: I have the honor to report that the last 2 cases of smallpox were discharged from the smallpox hospital on the 8th instant. Since the appearance of this disease in this city on January 20, 1899, there have been 97 cases, with 1 death. Of the total number of cases, 7 originated in Virginia.

Respectfully, yours,

WM. C. WOODWARD, M. D.,
Health Officer.

GEORGIA.

Report of smallpox in Montgomery County.

SAVANNAH, GA., July 15, 1899.

SIR: Having been requested by the authorities of Montgomery County, Ga., to investigate an eruptive disease existing in said county, I visited that locality yesterday. Montgomery County is in the southeastern portion of this State, the center of the county being about 92 miles from Savannah; population of county, about 10,000, about 6,000 of whom are negroes.

The Georgia and Alabama Railway cuts the county into two equal divisions from east and west, mills and turpentine stills being the chief industries, and they employ hundreds of ignorant, irresponsible negroes. I found 9 cases of smallpox among this population. The disease is mild, except in 2 cases, 1 semiconfluent and the other confluent; 8 cases isolated; the ninth was just found, and was ordered to join the others. The county has no board of health, but county commissioners will do their best, which will hardly control the disease, on account of lack of experience and lack of funds. No vaccination among negroes, and few whites found who had ever been vaccinated.

There are four, five, or six other places on the Georgia and Alabama Railway, running from Savannah, Ga., to Montgomery, Ala., having an eruptive disease which must undoubtedly be smallpox, and in some of these places no isolation is practiced. The disease is called by the medical men chicken pox, on account of its usual mild form, but the history of the cases shows the disease to be smallpox.

I shall make an effort to obtain transportation over this road, spending one or two days on a special train, when I will positively determine the location of all cases as well as the true nature of the disease. I shall then try to show to the governor of the State the necessity of ask-